

A grateful nation remembers those who gave all

by Congressman Collin Peterson

May 23, 2014

June 6, 2014, marks the 70th anniversary of D-Day, the first day of the invasion at Normandy. Our country will long remember those Americans who bravely gave or risked their lives for a worthy cause. I would like to recognize the 16 million Americans who served in the armed forces during World War II and the millions more who supported them at home.

Throughout my congressional career, I have made it a priority to ensure that our men and women in uniform, those who wore the uniform, and their families have a voice in Washington DC. It has been a privilege and an honor to spend time with veterans and their loved ones when I travel around the district.

Across the country, more than 20 percent of the 22 million veterans living in our country today reside in rural areas. In the 38 counties that make up Minnesota's Seventh District, we have more than 27,000 veterans under the age of 65, and around 24,000 veterans over the age of 65.

Not surprisingly, a disproportionate share of men and women who serve in the military today grew up in rural areas, and return home to rural areas.

Because so many of our veterans have returned home from service with serious health problems, I'm proud to have worked toward the improvement of access to care through community based outpatient clinics. I'm also proud to say that educational opportunities in our rural communities are strong as a result of the Post 9-11 GI Bill Congress passed to help veterans afford college.

I also want to recognize the military family organizations and veterans service organizations that do so much to support and serve our country. These patriots who continue to serve long after their orders have expired are the living embodiment--and the conscience--of the American spirit. Their service extends beyond the military.

Organizations like the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and others are important assets in our communities. Across Minnesota's Seventh District, and across the country, these groups provide leadership and guidance, they are a role model for our children, and they are a constant reminder of the call to and value of public service

This Memorial Day, during parades, ceremonies, and prayer services across the country, Americans will come together to remember those who have sacrificed their lives on behalf of our country in the name of freedom and democracy. The debt owed to them is immeasurable.